

# Register of Historic Kansas Places

## Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating individual properties and districts. The format is similar to the National Register of Historic Places form. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Hughes Conoco Service Station

Other name/site number 177-5400-0765

### 2. Location

Street & number 400 SW Taylor Street

☐ not for publication

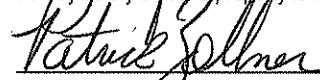
City or town Topeka

☐ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Shawnee Code 177 Zip code 66603

### 3.,4. Certification

I hereby certify that this property is listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places.



2-25-09

Patrick Zollner, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
<u>1</u>		structures
		objects
<u>2</u>		total

#### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

COMMERCE: Specialty Store

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE: Warehouse

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late-19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival

Other: Tudor Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Cement

Walls: Brick

Cement

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Other: Steel (Casement Windows); Cement (Floors); Tile

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the State Register)

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Transportation

Social History

### Period of Significance

1930-1959

### Significant Dates

1930; 1956; 1962

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

African American

### Architect/Builder

Unknown

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☒ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.0 acres

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	5	2	6	7	9	4	0	4	3	2	6	3	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								
2														

3														
Zone		Easting				Northing								
4														

☐ See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Thomas Rosenblum, Historian

Organization National Park Service Date 11/10/08

Street & number 1515 SE Monroe Street Telephone 785-354-4273

City or town Topeka State KS Zip code 66612

#### Property Owner

Name Edwin Hughes

Street & number 3324 SE 6th Avenue Telephone 785-235-8679

City or town Topeka State KS Zip code 66607

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Hughes Conoco Service Station  
Topeka, Shawnee County, KS

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

Hughes Conoco Service station is located on Lots 110 and 112 at 400 S.W. Taylor Street in the city of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas at the intersection of S.W. Taylor and S.W. Fourth Streets in an historically residential neighborhood. The station is set back in the southeast section of the lot with the front elevation facing north fronting on Fourth Street. The open area in front of the building and on the east side has a paved asphalt surface with wide curb cuts providing access from both Taylor and Fourth Streets. The Continental Oil Company purchased the lots on April 16, 1930 with the station being in operation by the following year.<sup>1</sup> The original 1930 filling station is a vernacular version of the Tudor Revival/English Cottage style utilizing specific architectural elements such as a round-arched front door, narrow multi-light casement windows, and a steeply pitched cross-gable roof configuration. In 1956, a two-bay, cement block garage was added on the original filling station's east side necessitated by changing demands for services. A cement island consisting of two sections each holding two gas pumps was constructed in 1957 and is located in the northwest section of the lot just off the front of the station.

The 1930 filling station is a one-and-a-half story, 198-square-foot building with a simple rectangular plan. The structure consists of an office/sales room and two washrooms, one of which was originally accessible from the station's interior and the other through an exterior door on the east elevation. In 1956, the interior washroom entrance was sealed off and replaced by an exterior doorway in the rear of the building. The interior retains its original cement plaster walls with white paint beneath a subsequent paint layer. An original wood storage shelf remains *in situ* spanning the entire north elevation just above the door and windows as does an original light switch plate. The original scored, tinted cement floor remains in place beneath a green linoleum tile floor. Both washrooms retain their original green tiles and cement plaster walls and floors.

The building rests on a cement slab foundation projecting slightly from the plane of the wall, encircling the building at its base. The brick walls are laid in a running bond. The station is oriented to the north, the front façade being nearly symmetrical with a centered door and cross gable with overhanging eaves. The arched front door is surmounted by a segmental brick arch and has a rusticated stone surround. Multi-light steel casement windows flank the door a six-light window to the east of the door and a sixteen-light window to the west. The west elevation contains a centered sixteen-light casement window with a glass transom. The south (rear) elevation contains a sixteen-light window directly opposite that on the front elevation. The door providing access to the station's rear washroom was added in 1956 probably replacing an original six-light window. The east elevation (now within the garage added in 1956) retains its original exterior entrance to the front washroom and six-light casement window. The exterior of the structure is presently painted white with red trim. The original "Conoco Green" exterior paint remains intact under a subsequent paint layer on the first nine courses of brick (up to the window lintels), the window lintels and metal muntins, front gable eaves, and rusticated stone door surround. The building's steeply pitched roof is covered with asphalt shingles, which were in place in 1956. Brick corbels remain just beneath the eaves on the northwest and southwest corners. The chimney is topped with a corbelled rim.

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<sup>1</sup> Warranty Deed, P.T. Johnson to Continental Oil Company, April 16, 1930, Shawnee County Deed Book, Vol. 618, p. 591.

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Hughes Conoco Service Station  
Topeka, Shawnee County, KS

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A 675-square-foot, one-story, two-bay cement block garage was added to the east elevation of the 1930 station in 1956. The structure consists of a single open space with exposed cement slab floor and cement block walls. There is no ceiling but rather exposed rafters and board roof. The garage was designed by an instructor with the Kansas Technical Institute by the name of McDowell and built by masonry students from the school. The structure juts out from the original station in the north (front) and south (rear). That portion of the garage adjoining the 1930 filling station shares a common wall with the older structure. The original door to the front washroom and six light casement window on the east elevation of the 1930 filling station remain *in situ* within the garage structure. Built on a cement slab, the garage was constructed of cement blocks with a wall height of fourteen feet with two large metal bay doors with lights on the north elevation. An entrance door is located on the west elevation and two four-light windows are located in the east and south elevations. The flat roof has a slightly sloping plane and is covered with asphalt. The original pulley system for opening and lowering the bay doors remains suspended from the ceiling and the original hydraulic floor lift is located on the west side floor of the garage. Some of the shelving installed in 1956 remains against the structure's interior walls.

The station's original two gas pumps were located directly to the west of the filling station. At an undetermined time before 1957, the station's gas pumps were re-located directly in front of the north (front) elevation of the 1930 filling station. In 1957 the pumps were moved several feet to the west. Two cement islands holding two gasoline pumps each were constructed. The pumps are presently stored in the two-bay garage addition. A metal pipe framework was installed above the pumps holding electric lights and remains in place.

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Hughes Conoco Service Station  
Topeka, Shawnee County, KS

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The cultural and historical significance of Hughes Conoco Service Station arises from its documenting service station architecture, the efforts of major oil companies to market their product in Kansas, the impact of the automobile on Topeka and Kansas, and the early integration of African American-owned businesses into formerly all-white areas of Topeka.

Hughes Conoco Service Station is an excellent surviving example of a Tudor Revival/English Cottage-style filling station constructed by oil companies across the nation in the late 1920s and early 1930s. These service stations were designed to both blend in with the residential neighborhoods in which they were constructed and serve as a corporate advertisement. The Tudor Revival/English Cottage style was a popular form of domestic filling station architecture partly because it was believed it would be readily accepted by residents of growing suburban neighborhoods. Casement windows, home-like entry doors, steep gable roofs, and chimneys were employed to create an aura of domesticity in Conoco's new service stations. In his examination of roadside commercial establishments, Chester Liebs noted "the sight of a little house selling gas along the roadside" was meant to "trigger a host of positive associations – friendliness, comfort and security – in the minds of motorists whizzing by."<sup>2</sup>

Filling stations such as Hughes Conoco also provide a physical artifact of what geographer John Jakle and historian Keith Sculle termed "place-product packaging – the networking of look-alike places defining trade territories, all supported through coordinated advertising."<sup>3</sup> The repetition of an architectural design would essentially function as a trademark and be readily recognizable by customers.

In 1899, after viewing a "horseless carriage" at the State Fair in Emporia, Kansas, *The Kansas City Star* announced, "The Automobile is here."<sup>4</sup> As early as 1900, Kansas ranked tenth in the nation in number of automobiles, with 220 vehicles statewide. In 1903, state lawmakers established a maximum speed limit in thickly populated or business areas of a town of ten miles per hour speed and not to exceed twenty miles per hour outside of the urban areas. State law also mandated that operators of motor vehicles "exercise every reasonable precaution" when approaching a horse drawn conveyance to prevent frightening the animal. In 1909, responding to the growing number of cars appearing on city streets, the Topeka City Commission adopted a speed limit of nine miles per hour downtown and eighteen miles per hour elsewhere in the city. In 1913 and 1914, Kansans registered more than 90,000 vehicles. By 1921, Kansas were purchasing automobiles at the rate of 300 per day and within two years there were 349,038 cars and 26,400 trucks which consumed 158,327 gallons of gasoline annually. By 1937, Kansas had 133,063 miles of road with 586,685 motor vehicles registered.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Chester A. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1995), p. 101

<sup>3</sup> John A. Jakle & Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *The Kansas City Star*, 13 November 1899.

<sup>5</sup> *The Topeka Capital Journal*, 21 February 1921, 7 April 1999; State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1903, Chap. 67 (Topeka: W. Y. Morgan, State Printer, 1930, p. 114; Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas*, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1984), p. 85; "Gas - Food - Lodging: How the Automobile Shaped Johnson County," [www.jocohistory.net](http://www.jocohistory.net).

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Hughes Conoco Service Station  
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In 1930, nineteen Topeka automobile dealerships were offering the latest Cadillac, Buick, Pontiac, Hudson, Studebaker, LaSalle, Oakland, and Ford cars. For those who could not afford a new vehicle, there were seven used car lots. Main Street had been transformed from a gathering place for people and horses and wagons to a parking place for automobiles. By the middle of the 1940s, the parking problem had become so acute in Topeka's business district that municipal leaders began eyeing property on Monroe and Harrison Streets to turn into parking lots.

The earliest gas stations in Topeka were locally owned and operated curbside pumps outside of existing retail outlets such as livery stables, hardware stores, automobile dealerships, and garages. As automobile ownership soared, the pumping of fuel became a specialized service and by 1920 the term filling station came into common use. The service stations, in fierce competition with each other, began coining catchy slogans and presenting detailed grocery lists of the virtues of their particular products. As growing motor vehicle ownership created greater demand for fuel, large oil companies began to try and force local distributors to sell only their brand of petroleum products and moved to establish their own service stations specifically designed to promote corporate identities.

The Continental Oil and Transportation Company, founded in Utah in 1875, opened its first service station in 1914. By the early 1930s Conoco was operating more than 1,000 service stations in fifteen states. To make their product readily identifiable to the public, the company adopted its trademark circular emblem with a Continental Army soldier standing below the Conoco name in 1919. In 1929, following a merger with the Marland Oil Company, Conoco adopted the red triangle with green trim formerly used by Marland, as its trademark.

Conoco purchased lots 110 and 112 at the intersection of Fourth and Taylor Streets in Topeka on April 16, 1930. The site was strategically located to be accessible from two primary arterial streets allowing the station to pull in traffic from all directions. In 1930, the neighborhood was largely residential with one, one-and-a-half and two-story dwellings with one story porches lining the streets. Sumner Elementary School stood just to the northwest of the station. Built in 1880, the original one-story brick school was set aside for the use of African-American children attending grades one through five. In 1885, reflecting the racial makeup of the neighborhood, the Topeka Board of Education re-assigned the school for the exclusive use of white children, the black students being transferred to the recently erected Buchanan School in the African American Tennessee Town neighborhood. There were also several locally owned commercial enterprises in the neighborhood of the filling station. The Rice Grocery Store was situated on the same block as the station. The Scott Ice Cream Factory and a yeast manufacturer both fronted on Fourth Street.

Conoco, already operating stations on Lane and Sixth Streets in Topeka, opened the station on the corner of Fourth and Taylor Streets in 1930 or 1931. Conoco, as other oil companies, employed a style of architecture to make their filling stations blend in with the neighborhood. One of the common styles of architecture employed by Conoco and others was the Tudor Revival/Cottage style. Architectural elements such as casement windows, home-like entry doors, steep gable roofs, corbelled window sills, and chimneys were meant to not only blend in with the neighborhood where garish colors and other unsightly

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Hughes Conoco Service Station  
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design elements might be objected to but be distinctive enough to serve as a three dimensional billboard for the company.<sup>6</sup>

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Conoco station was leased to several individuals including Orville W. Bobo and Swedish immigrant Axel Lindgren. Beginning in 1942 and continuing through the World War II period, no listings for any Conoco service station appear in the Topeka City Directory indicating that the stations may have been closed due to either gas rationing or Conoco's re-allocation of resources for the war effort. In February 1946, Topeka resident L. C. Lippincott purchased the station and two lots from Conoco.<sup>7</sup> Included with the property were a hydraulic automobile hoist, automatic air pump, and air pressure tank showing that the station had already begun to expand the services offered beyond pumping gas. Lippincott, who purchased all of the properties on the block fronting on Fourth Street, leased the station to various individuals. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the station operated as Lyle's Conoco Service and in 1954 and 1955 as Wayne's Conoco Service.

In 1956, Edwin Hughes, an African American, leased the Conoco Station. Hughes had arrived in Topeka in 1947 after serving in the armed forces to study auto mechanics at the Kansas Technical Institute. After completing his training, Hughes went on to work for the Goodyear Company. Determined to operate a service station, Hughes approached Lippincott in 1956 about leasing the Conoco station. Lippincott, however, refused to rent the station to a minority. Hughes persisted and on his fifth attempt finally convinced Lippincott to allow him to operate the station. That year, Hughes erected a two-bay cement block garage addition to the filling station, allowing him to expand services. Hughes became one of the first African Americans in Topeka to operate a business outside of Topeka's established black commercial district concentrated at S.E. Fourth Street bounded by S. Kansas Avenue on the west and S.E. Jefferson Street on the east and the first African American in the city to operate a station selling gas supplied by a major petroleum company.

In 1958, Hughes began sponsoring and coaching Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball teams all wearing uniforms emblazoned with the name Hughes Conoco. Hughes drove his teams around the country in an orange and black van, often having to cover many of the expenses out of his own pocket. Hughes retired from the AAU in 1998.

In 1962, Hughes purchased the Conoco Service Station from Lippincott.<sup>8</sup> He employed as many as five people to fill gas tanks and service automobiles. The re-designation of Fourth Street as a one-way thoroughfare in the early 1970s altered traffic patterns and impacted the station's business. Combined with the rise of the "Mini-Mart," business dropped off substantially and Hughes closed the station in 1982. Since that time Hughes has used the property to house a small antique business and as a storage warehouse. In 2005, in recognition of his years as a businessman and coach and for his positive impact on the city's youth, Hughes was inducted into the Topeka Business Hall of Fame.

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Vieyra, *"Filler 'er Up" An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations* (New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1979), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Warranty Deed, Continental Oil Company to L. C. Lippincott, February 8, 1946, Shawnee County Deed Book 908, p. 396.

<sup>8</sup> Warranty Deed, Beatrice Lippincott to Edwin Hughes, June 25, 1962, Shawnee County Deed Book 1481, p. 215.



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Hughes Conoco Service Station  
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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Books**

Continental Oil Company. *Conoco: The First One Hundred Years*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1975.

Federal Writer's Project. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1984.

Jakle, John A. & Keith A. Sculle. *The Gas Station in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Liebs, Chester H. *Main Street to Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Polk, R. L. & Co. *Radges Topeka City Directory*. Chicago: R. L. Polk and Company, 1921-1956

Sanborn Map Co. *Insurance Maps of Topeka, Kansas*, Vol. 1, 1913, Republished 1954.

Sanborn Map Co. *Insurance Maps of Topeka, Kansas*, Vol. 2, 1913 Republished 1954.

State of Kansas. *State of Kansas Session Laws, 1903*. Topeka: W. Y. Morgan, State Printer, 1903.

Vieyra, Daniel I. *"Fill 'er UP" An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations*. New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1979.

**Newspapers & Magazines**

*The Kansas City Star*, 13 November 1899

*The Topeka Capital Journal*, 21 February 1921

*The Topeka capital Journal*, 7 April 1999

*The Topeka Capital Journal*, 10 November 2004

*The Topeka Capital Journal*, 19 January 2005

*The Topeka Capital Journal*, 10 February 2008

"Topeka's Parking problem," *Topeka Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 2, August 1946.

**Web Pages**

Kansas State Historical Society

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**Hughes Conoco Service Station  
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"Conoco Inc. Company History." *www.conocophillips.com*

"Gas – Food – Lodging: How the Automobile Shaped Johnson County History." *www.jocohistory.net*

**Interviews**

Hughes, Edwin, interviewed by Thomas Rosenblum, 8 August 2008 & 25 September 2008.

**Local Government Records**

Shawnee County Register of Deeds, Office of Records, Topeka, KS. Copies in possession of Mr. Edwin Hughes, Topeka, KS.

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Section Number 10 & Photos Page 8

Hughes Conoco Service Station  
Topeka, Shawnee County, KS

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundary for Hughes Conoco Service Station conforms to the lots outlined on the Shawnee County Parcel Map. This is the boundary of Hughes Conoco when the station was established in 1930. The boundary for Hughes Conoco includes Lots 110 and 112 fronting on S.W. Fourth Street in Section 31, Township 11, Range 16 in West Topeka. These are the lots purchased by the Continental Oil Company.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

These are the historic boundaries associated with Hughes Conoco Service Station beginning in 1930 and through the site's period of significance.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Property Name: Hughes Conoco Service Station  
Location: 400 SW Taylor Street, Topeka, Shawnee County, KS  
Photographer: Sarah J. Martin  
Date: November 2008

Photo 1: North (front) elevation, facing S  
Photo 2: Entire parcel, showing north (front) and west (side) elevations, facing E  
Photo 3: North (front) and west (side) elevations, facing E  
Photo 4: West (side) and south (rear) elevations, facing E  
Photo 5: Front entrance, north (front) elevation, facing S  
Photo 6: Interior – east wall, facing E  
Photo 7: Interior – front door, facing NE  
Photo 8: Interior – northwest corner, facing NW  
Photo 9: Interior – close-up of door hardware  
Photo 10: Interior of garage bay showing exterior east wall of old station, facing SW  
Photo 11: Interior of bathroom  
Photo 12: Interior of garage bay, facing SE